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DR. FLETCHER COMMENTS ON SOYUZ 15 MISSION

Dr. James C. Fletcher, NASA Administrator, made the following statement today in response to questions concerning the Soyuz 15 Flight and its reported impact on the Apollo Soyuz Test Project Mission scheduled for next July.

"NASA personnel engaged in the Apollo Soyuz Test Project (ASTP) (in which Soviet and U.S. spacecraft are scheduled to dock in space next July) were informed in advance by Soviet personnel of the Soyuz 15 flight and its approximate timing.

"We were specifically informed in the case of both Soyuz 14 and 15 that they have no direct relationship to ASTP. Neither, for example, has carried the ASTP docking mechanism. We have no reason to doubt this information.

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"Reports that Soyuz 15 was a precursor of ASTP and that the crew was a back-up crew for that flight are, to the best of our knowledge, completely erroneous.

"The last Soviet manned flight known to be related to ASTP was Soyuz 12 which was a successful flight. We are informed by the Soviet side that there will be further Soyuz flights directly related to preparations for ASTP."

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